

COMMENTARY **Technology**

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Amazon logo seen at the entrance to Amazon's Shannon Building on Burlington Road in Dublin on Thursday, 08 July 2021, in Dublin, Ireland.

Artur Widak / NurPhoto / Getty Images

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 **Last week, Amazon.com prohibited ads on its website promoting the bestselling book “BLM: The Making of a New Marxist Revolution”.**

- 2 **Amazon said that the ad we created didn't comply with its “Creative Acceptance Policies” because it “contains book/s or content that is not allowed.**

- 3 **We must establish clear standards for how these companies behave—and mechanisms to hold them accountable when they don't.**

Last week, Amazon.com prohibited ads on its website promoting the bestselling book “BLM: The Making of a New Marxist Revolution,” a deep-dive into Black Lives Matter (BLM) organizations and their agenda to tear down America's institutions and replace them with their version of a Marxist Utopia.

When The Heritage Foundation attempted to place ads to promote Heritage Senior Fellow Mike Gonzalez's BLM exposé, Amazon said that the ad we created didn't comply with its “Creative Acceptance Policies” because it “contains book/s or content that is not allowed. Content that revolves around controversial or highly debated social topics is not permitted.”

Using that absurd standard, one of the world's largest booksellers apparently wouldn't allow ads for the biggest bestseller in history—the Bible—a book that stirs incredible debate and is considered controversial by those who don't believe it. Nor could anyone advertise books pro or con about federal spending, welfare, climate change, abortion, or COVID-19, for that matter.

Mr. Gonzalez's book is critically important to the debates we're having in America today over racial issues, the teaching of American history, and our American identity. The book delves deeply into the backgrounds of the BLM leaders, showing them to be avowed Marxists who say they want to dismantle our Constitution, our social institutions, and our very way of life. They use social media to spread their message and organize not just marches and sit-ins but riots that have been exceedingly destructive, violent, and even deadly.

>>> [Amazon's Senseless Bid To Bury My Exposé of Black Lives Matter](#)

Americans deserve to know the difference between genuinely saying "black lives matter" and the radical Marxists behind the Black Lives Matter organizations who want to overturn society and sow deep divisions among the American people.

That's why Heritage appealed Amazon's decision and issued a forceful public statement in response. Amazon subsequently reversed its decision and will allow the paid promotion of the book to move forward.

An Amazon spokesperson said that the original decision to ban the promotion resulted from human error, not an automated decision by a computer or algorithm. While I appreciate the reversal of such an egregious decision, this incident is consistent with the trend of Big Tech companies to suppress conservative speech they disagree with.

The fact that this was the result of human error further demonstrates the need for Big Tech companies to establish clear and consistent rules and policies and then implement them fairly across the board. Private companies certainly have the right to pick and choose what products are advertised and sold on their platforms. But too often, these companies have vague and very subjective rules. They inconsistently enforce those rules to censor viewpoints they disagree with, and they lack genuine recourse for users who are suspended from their platforms and services.

Although Amazon reversed its decision, it apparently has the no "controversial or highly debated social topics" standard in writing that one of its employees

was enforcing.

This episode is a reminder that while sometimes Big Tech can be pressured to respond in some instances of content suppression, there are many more instances where those without resources or a large enough public profile simply have to live with the arbitrary decisions made by these companies.

And it's not just censorship. Some companies are prohibiting conservatives from using their digital services like banking, digital payments, email delivery, and online fundraising when their only sin is to have a political viewpoint that differs from the generally leftist viewpoint of Big Tech.

That's why researchers at The Heritage Foundation's Center for Technology Policy continue to recommend legislative and regulatory solutions to ensure that these companies are held accountable when they unfairly suppress speech or deny services. While respecting the private property rights of such companies, Heritage has put forward solutions to limit the nearly unchecked power of Big Tech and make them more accountable to the American people.

>>> [When Government Demands Social Media Censorship, Americans of All Political Beliefs Lose](#)

Those solutions include targeted reforms of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which gives these companies certain legal protections when hosting user-published content on their platforms. Other solutions include organizing grassroots efforts to push for transparency from tech companies and ultimately encouraging the creation of alternative tech products and services that don't discriminate.

Examples of Big Tech censorship are inescapable and irrefutable. Sometimes they are brazen and outright; other times, they are dressed up in vague platitudes about "objectionable content." But the outcome is still the same—voices that these left-leaning companies don't agree with are deemed "unacceptable" and are silenced.

Big Tech's influence over everyday American life continues to grow. We must establish clear standards for how these companies behave—and mechanisms to

hold them accountable when they don't.

This piece originally appeared in The Washington Times

COLLECTIONS

Big Tech



COMMENTARY

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